

MEDICINE AND THE NAVY. By Christopher Lloyd and Jack L. S. Coulter. Vol. III, 1714-1815. (Pp. xi + 401. Illustrated. 50s.) Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone, 1961.

THIS is the third volume of the truly magnificent work begun some three years ago by the late Surgeon-Commander Keevil, who after his retirement from the service was keeper of the library of the Royal College of Physicians. Of the present authors, Christopher Lloyd is assistant professor at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and Jack Coulter, surgeon captain in charge of the Royal Naval Medical School. The volume, which contains 370 pages of text and has a most extensive bibliography, is well illustrated and written in an easy pleasant style, unaffected by any trace of pedantry.

The period under review is, of course, probably the most important in British naval medical history because the prolonged wars which occurred during it required the deployment of so many men and ships on foreign and tropical stations and because it was at this time that considerably more men perished from disease than from the direct consequences of enemy action. Time and time again this point is brought out by the authors, together with the failure of the authorities to appreciate it. Thus, Dr. James Lind (whose name is only mentioned once in the standard 8 volume history of the Royal Navy, and then in the wrong connection and misspelled!) recommended that it was much better on tropical stations to keep the sick in hospital ships than in sick quarters ashore. We know now that this recommendation showed great prescience at a time when the rôle of the mosquito in leading to infection with malaria and yellow fever was not understood. But Lind's point is also a sound administrative foundation, which might well have been applied to the conduct of naval medical operations in the second great world war of this century: instead of setting up base hospitals with elaborate staffs and equipment at different points in the eastern theatre, as was originally done, it would have been better to have earlier concentrated on the provision of hospital ships, the mobile value of which especially was subsequently proved in the later phases of the war.

This is only one instance of the many interesting points that emerge from study of hospital administration, hygiene, and the disposal of medical personnel and equipment during the wars. But, probably the most interesting part of the book deals with the history of the naval surgeons, who began life in the humble capacity of surgeon's mate, the social status of whom at that time can be summed up by Smollett's description of the captain of a ship as being a person who was "too much of a gentleman to know a surgeon's mate by sight." Few branches of our profession have had so little recognition as these men and especially James Lind, Thomas Trotter, Robert Robertson, and Leonard Gillespie. Sir Gilbert Blane was in a different position, not having passed through the lower ranks and being given the eminent office of Physician to the Fleet under Rodney, and at another time a member of the Sick and Hurt Board, which he adorned. Leonard Gillespie has a special interest for us in Northern Ireland because he was born in Armagh, practised for a time in that city, left a memorable journal of his experiences, both afloat and ashore, which is preserved in the Public Records Office, and because he had the privilege of being shipmate with Admiral Lord Nelson in the months before the Battle of Trafalgar. No better account of everyday life on board the Victory has ever been given than that which he records in a letter to his sister. The book can be unhesitatingly recommended to all interested in the study of medical history and especially as this concerns the Royal Navy.

R. S. A.

OAKES' POCKET MEDICAL DICTIONARY. Compiled by Nancy Roper. Ninth Edition. (Pp. xii + 492. 8s. 6d.) Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone, 1961.

"WORDS are good servants but bad masters," wrote Samuel Butler. This small, simple dictionary is not meant for doctors, but many will find it useful to give to an inexperienced medical typist; with it she will understand what she is typing and she will spell the words correctly. The dictionary is meant for nurses and would be a useful book to slip into an already overloaded uniform pocket when doing "block."

O. L. W.